

To Cite: McCausland T. From the Editor: Let's talk about weight. JHD. 2021;6(1):344–345.

Corresponding Author:
Tammy McCausland
editor@journalofhealthdesign.com

Copyright:
© 2021 The Authors. Published by Archetype Health Pty Ltd.. This is an open access article under the [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

SUMMARY

More people worldwide are overweight or obese. There are myriad reasons for the growing obesity epidemic, but snacking is one significant contributor that needs to be addressed. And while physicians face pressure to help patients manage their weight, significant innovation is needed for them to be able to really help patients.

Key Words

Obesity; overweight; weight management; snacking; healthy eating

INTRODUCTION

A growing percentage of the world's population are overweight or obese, and the statistics are startling. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), obesity has nearly tripled since 1975.¹ In 2016, 39 per cent of adults aged 18 years and over were overweight, and 13 per cent were obese.¹ In 2019, 38 million children under the age of 5 were overweight or obese.¹ Overweight and obesity has become a global health issue.

How did we get here? There could be myriad reasons such as greater adoption of the Western diet, reduced physical activity, and increased frequency of eating between meals. In this issue we present articles that discuss the impacts of snacking on our waistlines—and health—and the primary care physician's role in helping patients address issues of overweight and obesity. We also have a paper that explores what impact, if any, alcohol consumption has on men's weight.

In "Is snacking the new smoking?" the authors discuss how the normalising of snacking between meals has significant influences and implications. They assert the marketing narrative that snacking "is good for you" must be challenged. And they draw parallels between the public promotion of modern-day snacking and to cigarette smoking in the past. They raise the alarm about the negative health consequences arising from marketing, celebrity endorsement, and social normalisation narrative of snacking.

In a companion editorial, "Snacking cessation: It's time to challenge this eating behaviour," the authors discuss how snacking has come an acceptable eating pattern, which is problematic given the growing prevalence of obesity and overweight. The authors argue that it may be time to change more than our food choices—in fact, we should question the need to snack at all.

"Doctors have a limited role in managing obesity," the authors focus on the immense challenge of managing obesity. Amidst the growing obesity epidemic, physicians face increasing pressure to curb the trend. The authors contend that while urgent changes are needed to combat obesity and

the associated myriad health challenges, currently, medical practice is ill-equipped to effect change for patients. Healthcare systems require significant innovation to deliver strategies that will work.

“How alcohol consumption influences obesity in middle-aged men: A systematic review” is a review article. The author suggests total alcohol intake may influence overweight and obesity in some (particularly heavy) drinkers, but the magnitude of weight gain appears clinically marginal. Currently, robust evidence to support that reducing alcohol consumption may address the obesity epidemic is lacking and warrants further research. The author’s analysis of published studies favour current practice, which means clinicians should recognise and address drinking behaviours as one of many lifestyle factors pertinent to individual weight management.

At *The Journal of Health Design*, we’re committed to publishing, sharing, and promoting what healthcare practitioners, patients, designers, architects, and other innovators are doing to improve the delivery of health care despite constraints. [The Health Design Podcast](#) continues to feature thought leaders, practitioners, and recipients of health care doing exciting things and who have inspiring stories to tell.

Contact us at editor@journalofhealthdesign.com to recommend a podcast guest or to share information about someone doing great work to improve the patient experience and health outcomes. Remain engaged, keep reading, and let us know how we’re doing.

Follow us on Twitter @JHDinfo.